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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 000147

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [IR](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: IRANIAN IAEA PERM REP DEMANDS NEGOTIATIONS TO
AVOID FURTHER ESCALATION

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Classified By: Political M/C George Glass for reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a restricted high-level January 19 event organized by the Koerber Foundation, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iranian Permanent Representative to the IAEA argued that negotiations about Iran,s nuclear program remained the only constructive and promising approach to avoid further escalation. According to readouts of the event from German MFA contacts and from a contact within the think-tank, Soltanieh suggested that the West should refrain from offering more proposals and instead at least appear to respond to Iranian proposals. Some of the participants, among them MFA officials Emily Haber (P equivalent), Andreas Michaelis (NEA A/S equivalent) and prominent parliamentarians asked pointed questions about the need for enrichment for a civilian program and criticized Iran for not doing enough to dispel doubts about the nature of its nuclear program. The German Ambassador to Iran, Bern Erbel, who returned to attend the event, brushed off Soltanieh's presentation as a "desperate attempt" to try to buy more time by those who have little say in the Tehran decision making structure. A Koerber Foundation contact noted both sides appeared "stuck" in their positions and the discussion did not produce constructive results. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) As part of their series of meetings on Iran, the Koerber Foundation (a private, non-political-party affiliated organization) hosted Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iranian Permanent Representative to the IAEA in Berlin on January 19, 2010. During the discussion which was closed to the press, and was attended by MFA Political Director Emily Haber and Director General for the Middle East Ambassador Andreas Michaelis, Soltanieh stressed the need for confidence building measures between the West and Iran. He argued that negotiations are the only constructive and promising approach to avoid further escalation. According to Nora Mueller from the Koerber Foundation, Soltanieh complained that the tone of Western rhetoric is received negatively in Iran. Despite his calls for confidence building measures, he said it does not help if Western countries continue to approach Iran with proposals because what comes from the West is always perceived as being "forced" on the Iranians. Mueller said he implied "don't call us, we'll call you" with a proposal for a negotiated settlement. He also stressed that it was important to have a dialogue at &eye-level8 (i.e., on equal terms): negotiation partners should treat one another respectfully and talk in a reasonable tone. He laid blame on the West for the current conflict claiming that Iran,s behavior has always been transparent and it has abided by its NPT obligations while the West, for its own political reasons, is interested in making this an issue.

¶3. (SBU) According to the Koerber foundation, Soltanieh emphasized that the Iranian nuclear program only serves civilian purposes. The pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and atomic weapons has been condemned by religious authorities inside Iran and does not play a role in the Iranian national defense doctrine, he said. He reiterated Iran's legitimate right to procure nuclear technologies use them peacefully, and he argued that nuclear energy was essential to satisfy the growing energy need in Iran.

¶4. (C) Some of the discussion participants, among them CDU parliamentarian and chairman of the Foreign affairs committee Ruprecht Polenz and FDP foreign policy spokesman Rainer Stinner, criticized Iran for failing to dispel doubts about the civilian nature of its nuclear program. They asked why Iran needs an enrichment program if its intention is purely civilian and they asked why Iran did not respond positively to the IAEA offer to enrich abroad. According to Mueller, Soltanieh said that Iran does not trust the West and with regard to foreign enrichment has had bad experiences in the past, especially with Russia. We are afraid, he added, that we will not get the uranium back once it is sent abroad.

¶5. (C) Asked by German participants why they pursue a missile program, Soltanieh argued that Iran is not violating any international regimes and that Iran's program is not offensive but defensive in nature. The Germans attending the event also asked about the Qom/Fordu enrichment facility Soltanieh elaborated that its existence was kept secret because it was meant as back-up in case other facilities were destroyed in an attack. This, according to Mueller, provoked follow-up questions such as how many more secret facilities there are and how such an approach is able to build trust. The Germans argued that progress in the nuclear conflict could only be achieved if Iran contributed its share to building mutual trust. According to MFA contacts, MFA

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Mid-East Director Michaelis compared Iran with Olympic speed skating champion Claudia Pechstein who was banned from the next Olympics because of suspicious blood values detected during tests even though the authorities lack enough evidence to formally convict her of doping.

¶6. (C) Mueller said the discussion was lively and that German participants did inquire critically; however, both sides appeared "stuck" in their positions and the discussion did not produce constructive results. Human rights issues were, according to Mueller, not raised.

¶7. (SBU) On Iran, the Koerber Foundation has previously hosted Amir Mohebbian, co-editor of the newspaper Resalat, Gholam Hossein Nozari, Iranian oil minister and deputy foreign minister Ali Ahani for discussions in Berlin. All of these talks to which the Foundation invites senior German foreign policy officials from the government and parliament are confidential, closed to the media and closed to foreign Embassy participants.
Murphy